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EVOLUTION OF THE ALPHABET

It Grew From Pictures By Which Men First Wrote and Required Ages For Its Completion.

No one really knows all about where the alphabet came from, because it grew very slowly, like children and every other good thing in the world. But we know quite well that no ingenious man sat down and made the alphabet, and we know quite well, too, that the alphabet began as pictures.

Just as a child reads or takes things in by pictures long before it can read letters, so men used to read and write by pictures; and then these pictures were gradually made simpler and simpler until at last they could be used in every and any way, as our letters can. We know that the letter O was at first the picture of an eye, and that gradually men made the picture plainer, until at last they drew an O. The letter I was once a picture of a house; and very likely a capital A may have been at first the picture of a pyramid.

Ages and ages ago in Egypt men used both kinds of writing, says the Kansas City Star. The priests used the oldest kind, which was the pictures. This was called the sacred writing, in which the pictures were turned into letters. Not very many years ago men tried in vain to read the old sacred picture writing of the Egyptians, but they could not. Then they found the wonderful Rosetta stone, and this had written upon it the same thing three times—once in the pictures and once in the letters, and also once in other letters, and so men got the key to picture writing, and now it can be read easily.

TOOK PARROT BY MISTAKE

Country Gentleman Who Had Dined and Wined Too Well Couldn't Find His Lantern in Morning.

A certain gentleman living in the country, who was something of a bon viveur, was invited to dinner by a neighbor. The night was very dark, and in order to guide him on his way he took with him the stable lantern, a clumsy old thing bound round with wires. The gentleman reached his friend's house in safety and enjoyed himself extremely. The dinner was good and the wine excellent.

Presently the hour for the return journey arrived. He forgot to relight his lantern, but though the moon refused to shine he arrived home all right. On the following morning he could not find his precious lantern, so he sent his gardener with a note to his friend couched in the following terms: "Dear Jones: Will you kindly return to the bearer the stable lantern which I left at your house last night?"

"Yours sincerely,
"J. R. ROBINSON."
He received the following reply: "Dear Robinson: I am returning the lantern, but will you kindly send back the parrot and its cage you took away with you last night instead of your lantern? Yours sincerely,
"E. P. JONES."

America's Panorama.

See New York with her skyscrapers that lust for the clouds like the Tower of Babel; Niagara roaring in exultation and shining in the crisp winter sunlight through a veil of diamond dust; the Pacific pounding on the golden sands of California; Pittsburgh with her furnaces glaring at night against the April rain clouds; the Mississippi, mighty as the mightiest of gods, surging past sleepy southern villages, where of a Sunday morning the church bells stir the heart to vague, sweet longings; New Orleans with Canal street gay of a Saturday night and the moonlight shimmering on the white excursion boats beside the levee; Mackinac's white fort on the hilltop and the whisper of the Michigan pine woods; old Charleston, the clock of St. Michael's chiming the hours about the churchyard; Boston and Lexington and Concord, where at every turn there is a token of the pride that cannot die; West Point when the sunset gun echoes from the hills and the flag comes down.—Charles Phelps Cushing in Travel.

Not All So Harmless.

The part of Father Christmas may be easily overacted, as a certain town councillor would be the first to admit. He had been asked to take part in the annual treat to the old folk at the local workhouse. Made up as the ancient gentleman beloved of the children, he went, and for a time his pranks and antics delighted the company.

Then a scrap of conversation he chanced to overhear scarcely added to the worthy councillor's enjoyment. "Ain't 'e enjoyin' of 'imself?" remarked one aged inmate to another. "Wot a treat it is for the likes of 'e! But why can't they let all the loonies out on a night like this?"

"Well," came the reply, "mebbe they ain't all so harmless as this'n."

Be Quiet.

"Study to be quiet"—that is, study to dismiss all bustle and worry out of your inward life. Study also to "do your own business," and do not try to do the business of other people. A great deal of "creaturely activity" is expended in trying to do other people's business. It is often hard to "sit still" when we see our friends, according to our ideas, mismanaging matters, and making such dreadful blunders. But the divine order, as it is also the best human order as well, is for each one of us to do our own business, and to refrain from meddling with the business of anyone else.—Exchange.

FULFILLS PROPHET'S VISION

War's Flying Hosts Recall Isaiah's Words, "To the Land That Is Shadowing Dark With Wings."

Charles A. Dana, whose brilliancy as its editor made the New York Sun "shine for all," visited Jerusalem, says Gerard in the Philadelphia Ledger. He wrote afterward of the extraordinary material fulfillment of biblical prophecy wherein it was foretold that man should some day come up to the Holy City "behind a swaying furnace."

The little Baldwin locomotives upon its crooked track gave a good imitation of a "swaying furnace" that bright February day I ascended from Jaffa to Zion.

But that has nothing to do with airplanes, which is what I meant to write about. There are 50,000 airplanes hovering over the armies in Europe, and the United States may send over that many more.

Now turn to your Bible and read how old Jerusalem foresaw these flocks of winged men.

"Behold, he shall fly as an eagle and spread his wings." So said Jeremiah.

Hosea also took a mental photograph centuries upon centuries ago of this human bird: "He shall come like an eagle against the house of the Lord."

Zachariah, too, had a similar vision, and he beheld "two women, and the wind was in their wings."

But it was grand old Isaiah who pictured accurately what the Wright brothers were going to do thousands of years before they did it:

"The stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, Immanuel."

Can you put upon canvas a more graphic picture of those 50,000 air-men over the battlefields than did Isaiah: "To the land that is shadowing dark with wings?"

Is it any wonder that the old prophet inquired: "Who are these who fly as a cloud?"

A LONG WAY OFF



"So you're not going to marry me after all?"

"Oh! I may. I may marry you after all the rest."

SUBSTITUTES FOR LEATHER.

Owing to the scarcity of hides and skins and the increased demand for leather, many skins are now being tanned that were formerly considered to be worthless as leather. Thus today we find that the hides of whales and skins of fish are being converted into a marketable product.

As a result of the scarcity of hides and skins, various substitutes have been brought forward, so that we have imitation leather for furniture and automobile leather mats and glaze-finished linoleum products to take the place of upper leather, and finally several sole-leather substitutes. With all of these, however, the old saying holds good: There is nothing like leather.

NOTHING NEW.

"Are those jars you are putting your preserves in, sterilized ones, Mrs. Jay?"

"Oh, no; just common glass."

NEVER TOO OLD.

Miss Plain—Ma says I'm too young to marry.

Miss Pert—Well, you won't be by the time you get a proposal.

HONESTY'S IDEA.

"Do you believe honesty pays?" "Most assuredly; though I will admit that it is very modest in its idea of compensation."

A NOM DE PLUME.

"So you are an author and wrote this book, Mr. Hogg? Then why is the author's name Steve Sty?" "Oh, that's my pen name."

ALL REQUIREMENTS OF HERO

Meriwether Lewis, President Jefferson's Secretary, Had Qualifications Demanded in Fiction.

When a writer comes to the fashioning of a hero usually he wants a tall young man—the ladies love that sort. Meriwether Lewis was a tall young man, goodly in inches and in thews. A hero must have courage, or the ladies will not like him. What hero of fact or fiction ever showed more courage than he did? I question if Christopher Columbus ever needed more courage or ever showed more than Meriwether Lewis.

A hero must be a trifle of an elegant also, else the ladies will not like him. Meriwether Lewis was once called "a splendid dandy." He was not only President Thomas Jefferson's business assistant, but his social secretary as well, and arbiter of good form in the early days of Washington.

The ladies like a hero with a past, with a certain air of melancholy about him. No author need imagine these things for Meriwether Lewis—there was mystery and romance in all his life. Dead at thirty-five years of age, he died as he had lived, surrounded still with a very halo of mystery, enveloped in a splendid reticence which shielded him against all the world. That mystery exists even today. The full story of his life has never been told, and may never be told. In short, he was a hero, with all the elements of heroism. Of him certainly it might be written that he lived always a gentleman unafraid. Officer, gentleman, soldier, statesman, born leader and born lover—why imagine heroes when such as this exist!—Emerson Hough in Southern Woman's Magazine.

FIJIAN RACE IS DYING OUT

South Sea Islanders No Longer Savages and Cannibals But Humorous, Good-Natured Loafers.

The Fiji islands abound in reputation. To our grandparents they were the last word in barbarism, a smudge for anything at once remote and terrible, a place where missionaries got stowed—by the cannibals—and clothes were worn not at all.

The general impression of the South Sea Islands as a wild and degenerate part of the world was softened and illumined by the writings of Mark Twain about Hawaii and by Robert Louis Stevenson's essays from Samoa. But no one wrote anything important about the Fijians, and that is why the islands and people today are so very different from what you would expect to find them.

The Fijians are not only no longer savages and cannibals, but they are fast disappearing altogether. Hindus, Englishmen and Samoans are the toilers of the islands. The fierce Solomon Islander is seen here, too, but is more apt to be hunting your laundry than your head. The Fijian, still distinguished by the frizzled aureole of his hair and the scantiness of his attire, is a humorous, good-natured loafer. His native island is rapidly being taken away from him by more industrious peoples, and his race is dying out; but these things worry him not at all. He lives by the fish of his rivers and the wild fruit of the jungle, and by the skill of his wife in pottery and other handicrafts. He has given up cannibalism in deference to popular opinion. It is true, but in other ways he still lives his life much as he pleases, which is more than most of us ever achieve.

Navel Orange From Bahia.

It was from a plantation near Bahia, so far as can be determined, that the budding trees were obtained through which the navel orange wood was introduced into the United States. Several were shipped to the United States department of agriculture. Trees were grown in the department greenhouses, and others propagated from them were distributed to California and Florida. The variety proved to be unsuited to Florida conditions, but in California it is very productive and highly valued. Almost the entire present planting of the variety in that state, according to a writer in the Scientific American, can be traced directly back to two of the trees sent there by the department of agriculture in 1873.

Nation's Defense.

The wealth of a nation must be defended as well as constructed. . . . Even if the days of absolute conquest are past, there are yet a thousand liabilities to violent encroachment on the honor and rights of a people which they cannot be passive under without sacrificing a national spirit and well-nigh dissolving the bonds of government itself. But where lies the strength of a nation's defense? In such things as money purchases—ships, fortifications and magazines of war? No. The real public bulwarks of a nation are . . . public love, wisdom, and high command, attachment to home and bravery.—Horace Bushnell.

Night Owls Are Safe.

A celebrated scientist, who has made a lifelong study of different forms of bacteria, recently made the interesting announcement that there are more microbes in the air at nine o'clock in the morning and at nine o'clock at night than during any other periods of the day. He says that he has also discovered that the percentage of microbes in the atmosphere is less at three o'clock in the morning and at three o'clock in the afternoon than at any other times.

OLD CUSTOMS ARE RETAINED

Some Scottish and Welsh Regiments Keep Up Curious Ceremonies on Certain Anniversaries.

On anniversaries and special occasions most Scottish regiments keep up a curious custom called "kissing the quail." This is a shallow cup with two handles, which, toward the end of the dinner, is handed to each officer in turn full of liquor. Custom decrees that the vessel must be drained at a gulp, after which the holder twists it upside down and kisses the bottom to show that it is empty.

In Welsh regiments, on St. David's day, every subaltern who has joined since the last anniversary has to "pass the leak" that evening at mess. That is to say, he eats one of these not too nice smelling vegetables raw, while the regimental drummers sound a fanfare, and his brother officers cheer him ironically. Some few regiments still keep up the custom of placing on the mess table at dinner the "regent's wine," as it is called, one bottle of port and sherry. This is a legacy from George IV, who, when he was regent, decreed that every regiment should have two bottles of wine to drink his health at his expense. In most corps nowadays, however, the money is credited to the general mess fund.

PRESS BUTTONS FOR CARPETS

European Inventor Devises System Similar to That Used in the Fastening of Gloves.

The press button system with which we are familiar in gloves and garments has been applied by a European inventor for fixing carpets, tapestry, hangings and the like, says the Scientific American. For instance, a small spring socket is inserted flush with the floor, and the carpet carries a corresponding projection, so that all that is needed to lay a carpet or rug is to push the buttons into the sockets.

Again, the projections are mounted along a stout tape band and the sockets on another, quite like the usual pressure buttons. One tape is sewed to the rug and another can be tacked down upon an already laid carpet, so that the rug can be laid or removed instantly.

Hangings can be put on the walls in the same way. Curtains or portieres can also be mounted, and all such material can be at once removed for cleaning. In case of fire valuable hangings can be saved.

MAKING NAVIGATION SAFE.

The completeness with which the army engineers are robbing the Mississippi of its terrors is shown by the complaint of "Uncle" Memford, one of Mark Twain's river friends:

"When there used to be 4,000 steamboats and 10,000 acres of coal barges and rafts and trading scows, there wasn't a lantern from St. Paul to New Orleans and the snags were thicker than bristles on a hog's back; and now, when there's three dozen steamboats and navy barges and rafts, the government has snatched out all of the snags and lit up the shores like Broadway and a boat's as safe as she would be in heaven."

IN THE FAR SUBURBS.

"So your new cook came this afternoon. Do you think you can keep her long?"

"Well, she can't get any train back now until tomorrow morning."

FITTING IN.

"Those politicians seem inclined to use circus methods." "No wonder; don't you see they are peanut politicians?"

DOUBLE TROUBLE.

"Busy days for my wife."

"How so?"

"Has to keep her white shoes powdered as well as her face."

NOT BY ITS UMPIRE.

Dorothy—What is meant by stealing a base?

Henry—Why, it's a sort of diamond robbery.

INGRATITUDE.

"She married him because he saved her life."

"Well, I always said she had a pitiful disposition."

A WOMAN'S VIEW.

He—It is hard to ask for bread and get a stone!

She—It is worse to ask for a stone and get yarts.

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